

## **REMARKS**

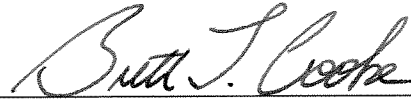
The applicant respectfully requests that the amendments of claims 1, 23 and 36 be entered, because the applicant believes that these amendments place the application in condition for allowance, or alternatively, in better form for appeal. The amendments should require only a cursory review by the examiner.

Independent claims 1 and 23 were rejected as either anticipated by or unpatentable over Eie. The limitation of a tubular member operatively coupled to a subsea well was broadly construed to cover an arrangement where a seabed engaging fundament provides support for tension legs, wells, and risers. Therefore, claims 1 and 23 are further limited to require the tubular member to be in fluid communication with the subsea well. This limitation is neither disclosed nor suggested by Eie. As amended, claims 1 and 23, and the claims dependant thereon, are believed to be novel and patentably distinct over the cited prior art.

Independent claim 36 was rejected as anticipated by Peterson. The limitation of an aperture being vertically formed through the hull and having a closed vertical periphery was broadly construed to cover the Peterson configuration where the slot is closed by cap 15. Therefore, claim 36 is amended to further require that the aperture has a closed vertical periphery throughout the extent of the aperture through said hull. This limitation is neither disclosed nor suggested by Peterson. As amended, claim 36, and the claims dependant thereon, are believed to be novel and patentably distinct over the cited prior art.

In summary, claims 1-7, 9-14, 16, 23-26, 30-32, 34-37, 39, 41-42, and 45-47 are pending in the application. As presented herein, these claims are believed to be new and unobvious over the cited prior art. Applicant believes the application is in condition for allowance. Applicant humbly requests entry of the amendments, reconsideration of the claims, and passage to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Brett T. Cooke", positioned above a horizontal line.

Brett T. Cooke

Reg. No. 55,836

Andrews & Kurth L.L.P.

600 Travis, Suite 4200

Houston, Texas 77002

713-220-3813 (office)

713-238-7163 (facsimile)

Customer No. 23,444

Date: August 15, 2006